

Andrew Jackson to Ezra Stiles Ely, September 3, 1829, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO REV. EZRA STILES ELY.¹

¹ With this letter it is well to have the following letter from Maj. A. J. Donelson, Jackson's secretary, to the Rev. E. S. Ely, September, 1829:

“ *My Dear Mr. Ely.* I recd. in proper time and manner your two communications, which I consider confidential the first explaining a part of your action here upon the *object of your visit*, the last giving your views upon some topics of national concern. In reference to the last, I offer you my sincere thanks, without the power to assure you whether I shall be able to apply them in the manner contemplated. If I shall due credit will be given to their disinterested source. No doubt your mind has been much disturbed by the apprehension of mischief possibly to grow out of the controversy between Mr. C[ampbell] and Mr. E[aton]. I wish I could say that there was no cause for it; but I cannot to you. Its combustible qualities can be ignited in so many different ways, the keys to some of which are in the hands of our enemy, that sooner or later, we must anticipate an explosion; and all that wisdom can now do is to give it as much as possible the direction which a private affair ought to have; to separate it as far as possible from the Governmt. and to rely on Providence for the aversion of the individual calamities which both sides may sustain. I beg that you will pardon my delay in answering your letters, and ascribe it to any thing else than a want of confidence in your sincere regard for the Genl, and tender concern for me. These ties are strengthened by the trials to which you have been recently exposed.”

Private

Library of Congress

Washington, September 3, 1829.

My D'r sir, On the 1st instant, the Revd. Mr. Campbell² requested an interview with me, and to my great astonishment, informed me that he was the Presbetarian Clergyman who had given you the information derived from the dead Doctor, respecting the miscarriage etc. etc. Never having suspected, or even heard it lispd that the Revd. Mr Campble was the individual, I was truly astonished for reasons I will give you when we meet. The more this thing is investigated the more I am convinced, of the wicked combination to slander, and to destroy the female alluded to. In the course of Mr Campble's relation of the information given him by this dead Doctor, I found it necessary for my satisfaction to ask Mr Campble what date was given by this dead Doctor of this transaction; viewing the date altogether important to the guilt, or innocence of the female concerned. Mr Campbell gave me the year 1821. I then brought to his view, the dilemma that the information given to him by this dead Doctor and which he had propagated and become the avowed author, if it should turn out upon investigation that mr Timberlake, was not absent in the year 1821 from the u states; the statement being that Mr. T. had been so long absent from Mrs. T. that he could not be the father—and I assured him such was my opinion and impressions. mr Campble replied he, Mr. T. from the information, must have been absent. I again repeated my opinion that he could not and gave him my reasons; that about that time he had been sued by the United States, judgt recovered and that he was petitioning congress for relief etc. etc. etc. Still Mr Campbell insisted that he certainly was absent in that year. We parted. I made a memorandum of the date that I might make the necessary enquiry into this fact so important to the truth or falshood of this slander, believing if I found the fact as I believed it was, that upon communicating the proof to Mr Campble he would be convinced of the wickedness

2 Rev. John N. Campbell, minister of the Second Presbyterian Church.

Library of Congress

of the slander, at once say to Mrs. Eaton, and acknowledge to the world, that he was now convinced of the injustice done her, and that he regretted ever having named it even confidentially.

On the 2d instant, so soon as my public engagements would permit I entered on the enquiry, and found that Mr. T. had been engaged in merchandize here and that his Books were in possession of Mrs. Eaton. I applied for a sight of the Books and upon examining them found entries in Mr. T. own handwriting, as was stated by those whom I asked the question, and was present; I took a copy of two entries with the dates, to shew Mr. Campble to convince him of the dilemma he was in, and the wickedness of this secrete slander. I had an interview this morning with Mr Campble, in the presence of Col. Towson and major Donelson and when I had made the statement and produced copies of the entries with the dates as proof to shew that Mr. T. was here he then said I must have mistaken him as to dates. I told him I could not for I had called the date given by him to his view, and pointed out the dilemma he would be in upon proof of this fact. He still had the hardihood to state I must have mistaken him, I again assured him I could not, and called upon him then to name the time given to him by the deceased Doctor; but no, no date could be named. You can as easily Judge of the impressions such conduct made upon my friends as tho I were to repeat them. Mr. Campble said he had employed council and would defend himself—poor deluded man, he has forgot that he has assumed the affirmative, and if he do not produce other proof, that his reputation as an embassader of christ is gone forever. What course major Eaton may adopt I know not, but I have often heard him say, that my Christian mothers advice was a good one, never to sue a man or indict him for slander.

The object of this letter is to give you hint how matters are here, is to say to you, that I wish it, and I think it necessary that you come on here as soon as you can—it is proper that you should for many reasons—and one, tho last not least, you may save Mr Campbell from public exposure. I have your promise that you will visit me and shall expect you on as soon

Library of Congress

as your convenience will permit and I shall expect you to stay with me. With compliments to your amiable lady and all yr family and connections and believe sincerely your friend